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DOCUMENTS

RELATING TO THE DANISH WEST INDIES

It is possible to multiply here the documents bearing on the Danish West Indies but these are considered adequate to give the student of history an idea as to the colonial policy of the Danes, their treatment of the bondmen and the subsequent self-assertion which culminated in open resistance to established authority. We are concerned then with what the Danish were endeavoring to do, what they actually accomplished, and what the observer from afar thought of these achievements. To bring out more strikingly these phases of the situation these documents have been added.

A SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE ISLANDS OF ST. THOMAS AND ST. CROIX, IN THE POSSESSION OF THE DANES, IN 1769

The only remaining islands in this part of the world, that we shall now mention, are those of St. Thomas and St. Croix, which belong to the Danes; the former is situated in 18°. north latitude, and is one of that cluster of islands called the Virgins. Though it is not above seven leagues in circumference, it is in a commodious situation, and has an excellent port of an oval form, in a manner surrounded by two promontories, which defend the ships that lie within from almost all winds. In the bottom of this port is a small fortress which stands in a plain, and is a regular square with four small bastions, but it has neither outworks nor a ditch, it being only surrounded with a pallsade. On the right and left of the fort are two small eminences which in our plantations would be called bluffs; but though they seem designed for batteries that would command the whole harbour, no such use is made of them. The King of Denmark has here a Governor and a garrison; notwithstanding which, there is a large factory on the island belonging to the Brandenburgers, the subjects of the King of Prussia.

The neighbourhood of the Spanish island of Porto Rico is only at 17 leagues distance, and secures the inhabitants from the danger

of wanting provisions, to which they would otherwise be exposed; for though the soil is tolerably good and every foot of it cultivated, yet it would not produce sufficient for the maintenance of the inhabitants, who are very numerous.

The town of St. Thomas consists of one long street, at the end of which is the Danish magazine, a large magnificent and convenient building. The Brandenburg factory is also very considerable, and the persons belonging to it are chiefly French refugees, who fled thither when the protestants were expelled from the French islands. The chief produce of their plantations is sugar, which is very fine grained, but made in small quantities; yet the Danish Governor, who is usually a man of some rank, lives in a manner suitable to his character, and generally acquires a good fortune in that station. The director of the Danish trade also becomes rich in a few years, and the inhabitants in general are in very easy circumstances.

To this island the Spaniards are continually sending large vessels to purchase slaves. This is the chief support of the Danish and Brandenburg commerce, as these slaves are drawn from their settlements upon the coast of Africa, which, if they had not this trade, would have long ago become useless, and consequently deserted. The Spaniards also buy here, as well as at Curacao, all sorts of European goods, of which there is always a vast stock in the magazine, belonging chiefly to the Dutch. There is likewise a great resort of English, Dutch, and French, vessels to this port, where they can always depend upon the sale of superfluous, and the purchase of necessary commodities. But though a prodigious deal of business is transacted in time of peace, in time of war it is vastly increased, for being a neutral port, the privateers of all nations resort thither to sell their prizes.

St. Croix is seated about five leagues east of St. Thomas's, and about 30 west of St. Christopher's, in 18°. north lat. and in 65°. west longitude. It is about ten or twelve leagues in length, but not above three broad. The air is very unhealthy but the soil is easily cultivated; very fertile, and produces sugar canes, citrons, oranges, lemons, pomegranates, and other excellent fruits, and has several fine trees, whose wood is very beautiful, and proper for in-laying.

This island has had several masters; but the French abandoning it in 1696, it was purchased by his late Danish Majesty. It was

then a perfect desert, but was settled with great expedition, many persons from the English islands, and among them some of great wealth, having removed thither.—“*The World displayed or a Curious Collection of Voyages and Travels*,” 1769, pp. 127–129.

II

DANISH COLONIZATION IN THE WEST INDIES IN 1798

The Danes had no sooner submitted to one single chief, than they fell into a kind of lethargic state. To those great convulsions, which are occasioned by the clashing of important rights, succeeded the delusive tranquillity of servitude. A nation, which had filled the scene for several ages, appeared no more on the theatre of the world. In 1671, it just recovered so far from the trance, into which the accession of despotism had thrown it, as to look abroad, and take possession of a little American island, known by the name of St. Thomas.

This island, the farthest of the Caribbees towards the west, was totally uninhabited, when the Danes undertook to form a settlement upon it. They were at first opposed by the English, under pretence that some emigrants of that nation had formerly begun to clear it. The British ministry stopped the progress of this interference; and the colony were left to form plantations of sugar, such as a sandy soil, of no greater extent than five leagues in length, and two and a half in breadth, would admit of. These improvements, which were at that time very rare in the American Archipelago, were brought on by particular causes.

The Elector of Brandenburg had formed, in 1681, a company for the western part of Africa. The object of this association was to purchase slaves; but they were to be sold again; and that could be done in no other place than in the New World. It was proposed to the court of Versailles to receive them in their possessions, or to cede Santa-Cruz. These two proposals being equally rejected, Frederic William turned his views towards St. Thomas. Denmark consented in 1685, that the subjects of this enterprising prince should establish a factory in the island, and that they should carry on a free trade there, upon condition of paying the taxes established, and of agreeing to give an annual stipend.

They were then in hopes of furnishing the Spanish colonies, which were dissatisfied with England and Holland, with the Negroes which those provinces were continually in want of. The

treaty not having taken place, and the vexations being incessantly multiplied, even at St. Thomas's, the transactions of the inhabitants of Brandenburg were always more or less unfortunate. Their contract, however, which had been only made at first for thirty years, was renewed. Some few of them still belonged to it, even in 1731; but without any shares or any charter.

Nevertheless, it was neither to the productions, nor to the undertakings of the inhabitants of Brandenburg, that the island of St. Thomas was indebted for its importance.

The sea has hollowed out from its coast an excellent harbour, in which fifty ships may ride with security. This advantage attracted both the English and French Buccaneers, who were desirous of exempting their booty from the duties they were subject to pay in the settlements belonging to their own nations. Whenever they had taken their prizes in the lower latitudes, from which they could not make the Windward Islands, they put into that of St. Thomas to dispose of them. It was also the asylum of all merchant-ships which frequented it as a neutral port in time of war. It was the mart, where the neighbouring colonies bartered their respective commodities which they could not do elsewhere with so much ease and safety. It was the port from which were continually dispatched vessels richly laden to carry on a clandestine trade with the Spanish coasts; in return for which, they brought back considerable quantities of metal and merchandise of great value. In a word, St. Thomas was a market of very great consequence.

Denmark, however, reaped no advantage from the rapid circulation. The persons who enriched themselves were foreigners, who carried their wealth to other situations. The mother-country had no other communication with its colony than by a single ship, sent out annually to Africa to purchase slaves, which being sold in America, the ship returned home laden with the productions of that country. In 1719 their traffic increased by the clearing of the island of St. John, which is adjacent to St. Thomas, but not half so large. These slender beginnings would have required the addition of Crab Island, or Bourriquen, where it had been attempted to form a settlement two years before.

This island, which is from eight to ten leagues in circumference, has a considerable number of hills; but they are neither barren, steep, nor very high. The soil of the plains and valleys, which run between them, seems to be very fruitful; and is watered

by a number of springs, the water of which is said to be excellent. Nature, at the same time that she has denied it a harbour, has made it amends by a multitude of the finest bays that can be conceived. At every step some remains of plantations, rows of orange and lemon trees, are still found; which make it evident, that the Spaniards of Porto-Rico, who are not further distant than five or six leagues, had formerly settled there.

The English, observing that so promising an island was without inhabitants, began to raise some plantations there towards the end of the last century; but they had not time to reap the fruit of their labour. They were surprised by the Spaniards, who murdered all the men, and carried off the women and children to Porto-Rico. This accident did not deter the Danes from making some attempts to settle there in 1717. But the subjects of Great Britain, reclaiming their ancient rights, sent thither some adventurers, who were at first plundered, and soon after driven off, by the Spaniards. The jealousy of these American tyrants extends even to the prohibiting of fishing-boats to approach any shore where they have a right of possession, though they do not exercise it. Too idle to prosecute cultivation, too suspicious to admit industrious neighbours, they condemn the Crab Island to eternal solitude; they will neither inhabit it themselves, nor suffer any other nation to inhabit it. Such an exertion of exclusive sovereignty has obliged Denmark to give up this island for that of Santa Cruz.

Santa Cruz had a better title to become an object of national ambition. It is eighteen leagues in length, and from three to four in breadth. In 1643 it was inhabited by Dutch and English. Their rivalry in trade soon made them enemies to each other. In 1646, after an obstinate and bloody engagement, the Dutch were beat, and obliged to quit a spot from which they had formed great expectations. The conquerors were employed in securing the consequences of their victory, when, in 1650, they were attacked and driven out in their turn by twelve hundred Spaniards, who arrived there in five ships. The triumph of these lasted but a few months. The remains of that numerous body, which were left for the defence of the island, surrendered without resistance to a hundred and sixty French, who had embarked in 1651, from St. Christopher's, to make themselves masters of the island.

These new inhabitants lost no time in making themselves acquainted with a country so much disputed. On a soil, in other respects excellent, they found only one river of a moderate size,

which, gliding gently almost on a level with the sea through a flat country, furnished only a brackish water. Two or three springs, which they found in the innermost parts of the island, made but feeble amends for this defect. The wells were for the most part dry. The construction of reservoirs required time. Nor was the climate more inviting to the new inhabitants. The island being flat, and covered with old trees, scarce afforded an opportunity for the winds to carry off the poisonous vapours, with which its morasses clogged the atmosphere. There was but one remedy for this inconvenience; which was to burn the woods. The French set fire to them without delay; and, getting on board their ships, became spectators from the sea, for several months, of the conflagration they had raised in the island. As soon as the flames were extinguished, they went on shore again.

They found the soil fertile beyond belief. Tobacco, cotton, arnotto, indigo, and sugar, flourished equally in it. So rapid was the progress of this colony, that, in eleven years from its commencement, there were upon it eight hundred and twenty-two white persons, with a proportionable number of slaves. It was rapidly advancing to prosperity, when such obstacles were thrown in the way of its activity as made it decline again. This decay was as sudden as its rise. In 1696 there were no more than one hundred and forty-seven men, with their wives and children, and six hundred and twenty-three blacks remaining; and these were transported from hence to St. Domingo.

Some obscure individuals, some writers unacquainted with the views of government, with their secret negotiations, with the character of their ministers, with the interests of the protectors and the protected, who flatter themselves that they can discern the reason of events, amongst a multitude of important or frivolous causes, which may have equally occasioned them; who do not conceive, that among all these causes, the most natural may possibly be the farthest from the truth; who after having read the news, of journal of the day, with profound attention, decide as peremptorily as if they had been placed all their life-time at the helm of the state, and had assisted at the council of kings; who are never more deceived than in those circumstances, in which they display some share of penetration; writers as absurd in the praise as in the blame which they bestow upon nations, in the favourable or unfavourable opinion they form of ministerial operations; these idle dreamers, in a word, who think they are persons of importance, because

their attention is always engaged on matters of consequence, being convinced that courts are always governed in their decisions by the most comprehensive views of profound policy, have supposed, that the court of Versailles had neglected Santa Cruz, merely because they wished to abandon the small islands, in order to unite all their strength, industry, and population, in the large ones; but this is a mistaken notion: this determination, on the contrary, arose from the farmers of the revenue, who found, that the contraband trade of Santa Cruz with St. Thomas was detrimental to their interests. The spirit of finance hath in all times been injurious to commerce; it hath destroyed the source from whence it sprang. Santa Cruz continued without inhabitants, and without cultivation, till 1733, when it was sold by France to Denmark for 738,000 livres (30,750*l.*). Soon after the Danes built there the fortress of Christianstadt.

Then it was, that this northern power seemed likely to take deep root in America. Unfortunately, she laid her plantations under the yoke of exclusive privileges. Industrious people of all sects, particularly Moravians, strove in vain to overcome this great difficulty. Many attempts were made to reconcile the interests of the colonists and their oppressors, but without success. The two parties kept up a continual struggle of animosity, not of industry. At length the government, with a moderation not to be expected from its constitution, purchased, in 1754, the privileges and effects of the Company. The price was fixed at 9,900,000 livres (412,500*l.*) part of which was paid in ready money, and the remainder in bills upon the treasury, bearing interest. From this time the navigation to the islands was opened to all the subjects of the Danish dominions.

On the first January 1773, there was reckoned in St. John sixty-nine plantations, twenty-seven of which were devoted to the culture of sugar, and forty-two to other productions of less importance. There were exactly the same number at St. Thomas, and they had the same destination, but were much more considerable. Of three hundred and forty-five plantations, which were seen at Santa Cruz, one hundred and fifty were covered with sugar-canes. In the two former islands, the plantations acquire what degree of extent it is in the power of the planter to give them, but in the last, every habitation is limited to three thousand Danish feet in length, and two thousand in breadth.

St. John is inhabited by one hundred and ten white men, and

by two thousand three hundred and twenty-four slaves: St. Thomas, by three hundred and thirty-six white men, and by four thousand two hundred and ninety-six slaves: Santa Cruz, by two thousand one hundred and thirty-six white men, and by twenty-two thousand two hundred and forty-four slaves. There are no freed men at St. John's, and only fifty-two at St. Thomas, and one hundred and fifty-five at Santa Cruz; and yet the formalities required for granting liberty are nothing more than a simple enrolment in a court of justice. If so great a facility hath not multiplied these acts of benevolence, it is because they have been forbidden to those who had contracted debts. It hath been apprehended, that the debtors might be tempted to be generous at the expence of their creditors.

This law appears to me a very prudent one; with some mitigation it might be of service, even in our countries. I should very much approve, that all citizens invested with honourable functions, either at court, in the army, in the church, or in the magistracy, should be suspended whenever they should be legally sued by a creditor, and that they should be unremittingly deprived of their rank whenever they should be declared insolvent by the tribunals. It appears to me that money would then be lent with more confidence, and borrowed with greater circumspection. Another advantage which would accrue from such a regulation, would be, that the subaltern orders of men, who imitate the customs and the prejudices of the higher class of citizens, would soon be apprehensive of incurring the same disgrace; and that fidelity in engagements would become one of the characteristic of the national manners.

The annual productions of the Danish islands are reduced to a small quantity of coffee, to a great deal of cotton, to seventeen or eighteen millions weight of raw sugar, and to a proportionate quantity of rum. Part of these commodities are delivered to the English, who are proprietors of the best plantations, and in possession of the slave trade. We have before us at present, very authentic accounts, which prove that from 1756 to 1773, that nation hath sold in the Danish settlements of the New World, to the amount of 2,307,686 livres 11 sols (96,153l. 125.1½d.). and carried off to the value of 3,197,047 livres 5 sols 6 deniers (133,210l. 6s. 0¾d.). North America receives likewise some of these productions in exchange for its cattle, for its wood, and for its flour. The remainder is conveyed to the mother-country upon

forty ships of one hundred, and from that to four hundred tons burden. The greatest part is consumed in Denmark, and there is scarcely sold in Germany, or in the Baltic, for more than the value of one million of livres (41,661l. 13s. 4d.).

The lands susceptible of cultivation in the Danish islands are not all tilled, and those which are, might be improved. According to the opinion of the best-informed men, the produce of these possessions might easily be increased by one third, or perhaps by one half.

One great obstacle to this increase of riches, is the extremely narrow circumstances of the colonists. They owe 4,500,000 livres (187,500l.) to the government, 1,200,000 livres (50,000l.) to the trade of the mother-country, and 26,630,170 livres (1,109,590l. 8s. 4d.) to the Dutch, who, from the immensity of their capitals, and the impossibility of employing them all themselves, necessarily become the creditors of all nations.

The avidity of the treasury puts fresh restraints upon industry. The provisions and merchandise which are not peculiar to the country, or which have not been brought upon Danish vessels, are obliged to pay four per cent. upon their departure from Europe. The national and foreign commodities equally pay six per cent. on their arrival in the islands; 18 livres (15s) are required for every fresh Negro brought in, and a poll-tax of 4 livres 10 sols (3s. 9d.). Some heavy duties are laid upon stamp paper; an impost of 9 livres (7s. 6d.) for each thousand foot square of ground, and the tenth of the price of every habitation that is sold. The productions are all subjected to five per cent. duty on their leaving the colonies, and to three per cent. on their arrival in any of the ports of the mother-country, exclusive of the duties which are paid for rum when consumed in retail. These tributes collectively bring in to the crown an income of eight or nine hundred thousand livres, (from 33,333 pounds. 6s. 8d. to 37,500l.).

It is time that the court of Copenhagen should give up these numerous and oppressive taxes. Well-grounded motives of interest ought certainly to suggest the same kind of conduct to all the powers that have possessions in the New World. But Denmark is more particularly compelled to this act of generosity. The planters are loaded with such enormous debts, that they will never be able to repay the capitals, and cannot even make good the arrears, unless the treasury should entirely drop every kind of claim upon them.

But can such a prudent measure be expected, either in Denmark or elsewhere, as long as the public expences shall exceed the public revenues; as long as the fatal events, which, in the present order, or rather disorder, of things, are perpetually renewed, shall compel the administration to double or to treble the burden of their unfortunate, and already overloaded subjects; as long as the councils of the sovereigns shall act without any certain views, and without any settled plan; as long as ministers shall conduct themselves, as if the empire, or their functions, were to end the next day; as long as the national treasures shall be exhausted by unparalleled depredations, and that its indigence shall only be removed by extravagant speculations, the ruinous consequences of which will not be perceived, or will be neglected, for the trifling advantages of the moment? and to make use of an energetic, but true metaphor, one that is terrifying, but symbolical of what is practised in all countries; as long as the folly, the avarice, the dissipation, the degradation, or the tyranny of the rulers, shall have rendered the treasury so much exhausted or rapacious, as to induce them to *burn the harvest, in order the more speedily to collect the price of the ashes!*

If the treasury were by chance to become wiser and more generous in Denmark than they have been, or than they are in any other part of the globe, the islands of St. Thomas, of St. John, and of Santa Cruz, might possibly prosper, and their productions might, in some measure, compensate for the trifling value of those of the mother-country.—ABBÉ RAYNAL, *A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies*, 1798, pp. 256–265.

III

SANTA CRUZ IN GENERAL IN 1838

St. Croix is an island, about eighteen miles long, situated in latitude 17° 45' north, longitude—west of Greenwich. It is almost exclusively devoted to the cultivation of sugar-cane, and the manufacture of sugar molasses, and rum. In a good season it produces from fifty to sixty thousand hogsheads of muscovado sugar of the best quality. It is generally calculated that the molasses and rum will pay all the contingent expenses of the estates; leaving the sugar for clear income, which at seventy-five dollars the hogshead, for which it is generally sold there, in a good season, amounts to

three millions seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars. This great revenue is produced by the careful cultivation of almost every inch of the soil, the estates generally consisting of but one hundred and fifty to three hundred acres each; and nearly one hundred negroes being employed upon each one hundred and fifty acres. The soil is dry and sweet, producing the best cane, and consequently the best sugar known. I had heard much of filthiness in the manufacture of sugar and molasses, but the first view of a St. Croix sugar works contradicted it. The kettles, the vats in which the sugar is cooled, the hogsheads in which it is drained, and even the molasses vats under them, are so perfectly neat and clean, that no one who has seen them can feel any squeamishness in eating St. Croix sugar, or molasses either. To look at a vat-full, a foot deep, just chrystalizing over the surface, and perfectly transparent to the bottom, would satisfy the most scrupulous upon this point. There is about twenty-five thousand black, and three thousand white population. Of course, it is seldom a white man is seen in riding through the island.

Many of the blacks are free, and the slaves, by the protection afforded them by the Danish laws, are about as well satisfied with slavery as they would be with freedom. No slave can be taken from the island without security for his or her return; masters cannot inflict punishment without the intervention of public authority; no slave can be sold against his or her consent, except with the estate; and cheap and easy provisions are made for emancipation. Such is the expectation of a general abolition, that the prices of slaves are only about one fourth as high as in the United States. In the village of Christianstadt, a large proportion of the retail trade, and nearly all the mechanical labour, is in the hands of the free blacks and mulattoes; and the politeness, intelligence, and ability of some of these, would surprise those who think their race by Nature unfit for freedom. Many of them have good countenances, are well behaved, and appear to evince as much discretion and judgment as whites under similar circumstances. Some of them hold commissions in the militia service; one has been promoted to the distinguished situation of Governor's aid-de-camp; and instead of considering the race as on a level with brutes, many of the white inhabitants deem them nearly, if not quite, on a level with themselves. I listened for a whole evening to a very warm discussion of the question, whether a lady would be justified in re-

fusing to dance with a negro or mulatto at a ball; and the negative was not wanting in supporters.

It is almost surprising, that so small a number of proprietors should have had the public spirit and perseverance to make such costly fine roads, not only as public highways whenever needed, but should also have made a good private road around almost every estate; beautifully ornamenting both with palm and cocoa-nut trees, which cut the whole into squares, and add much to the beauty of the scenery. On each estate there are generally a fine mansion, a sugar-house, windmill, and plenty of negro-houses, all situate upon an eminence and interspersed with fruit and ornamental trees. Little attention is given, however, to the cultivation of fruits, and, in many places, not an orange will be seen for miles. Sugar-cane seems to have engrossed the whole attention of the inhabitants, and crowded out almost every thing else.—*A Winter in the West Indies and Florida by an Invalid*, 1839, pp. 62-65.

IV

A LETTER FROM AN AMERICAN VISITING SANTA CRUZ IN 1840

My dear Friend,

* * * * *

I understand that the slaves form about four-fifths of the population, and are in number about 19,000. Time was, when the treatment to which they were exposed, was harsh and severe; and then their numbers were constantly declining. Of late years, however, the Danish government has instituted various restrictions which have ameliorated the condition of the slaves. They are not allowed, as I understand, to be worked longer in the day, than from 6 o'clock in the morning, to the same hour in the evening, with intervals, (not always long enough) for breakfast and dinner. Legal provisions are made respecting food and clothing. The driver in the field is not permitted to carry any more terrible instrument than a tamarind switch of moderate size; and twelve lashes with the rope, and a short period of solitary confinement, (mostly I believe in a light room) are the extent of punishment which even the manager or master is permitted to inflict. This rope however, is a dangerous instrument of torture; and I am told that the reduction of the allowed number of lashes, from thirty to twelve, is no matter of law, but the simple result of the imperative benevolence

of the governor-general Von Scholten. Any negro has a right to buy his own freedom; and, in case of need, the price is settled by a public appraiser. The consequence of these benevolent provisions is, that the condition of the slaves is improved, and their number is now kept up, with a very small increase.

I cannot, however, refrain from observing, that legal provisions for the amelioration of slavery, are in general of little use. In the British Colonies, the measures of this kind which were enacted by the Parliament at home, were constantly frustrated by local influence; and in spite of law or reason, man will often be found, in the hour of temptation, to abuse arbitrary power over his fellow man. I consider it therefore highly probable, that even in Santa Cruz, where the ameliorating laws are enforced by a local government, at once vigilant and despotic, acts of oppression and cruelty may at times take place, which are wholly unknown to the government; much more, to an occasional visitor of the island.

In the mean time the degradation occasioned by slavery in the Danish islands—the low physical, intellectual, and moral condition of the slaves, as compared with that of the liberated negroes of the British islands—is obvious and unquestionable. The worst feature of the system is the “Sunday market,” as it is called. The slaves are allowed no one of the working days of the week for their own business. The consequence is, that multitudes of them throng from the country (often from a great distance) into the towns of Bassin and West End, on the First day of the week, with their provisions and fruits for sale. The rum shops are hard by the market places. The buyers, of course, misuse the day as well as the sellers; and the scene is one, not only of busy traffic, but of noisy merriment, idleness, and dissipation. Before we left Santa Cruz, we called on General Söbötter, the present Governor, of the island, to take our leave; and we ventured to press this subject on his consideration, not without some remarks on slavery in general. He listened to us in a very obliging manner, and seemed to look forward to better days; but his last words to us, as we went down the steps from his door, were, “PATIENCE, PATIENCE, PATIENCE.”

It was very satisfactory to us, to learn from our friend Captain Von Scholten, the brother of the Governor General (then in Denmark) that a commission had been appointed at Copenhagen, to enquire into the state of these colonies, with a view to emancipation. In the meantime, seven large buildings have been erected in

different parts of the island, to serve as chapels and schools, for the religious and literary instruction of the Negro population. They are not yet in use: but several of the planters are making laudable exertions for the education of their slaves in reading and in a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. A colored person of the name of Macfarlane, in every way adapted for the office, is employed for the purpose; this school circulates, with excellent effect, from one estate to another. Having been taught their moral and religious obligations, the negroes, on these estates, are greatly improved, and are much more useful to their masters, than in the days of their ignorance.

The schools held on the First day of the week under the care of the members of the Episcopal church, at Bassin and West End, are attended by several hundreds of black, mulatto, and white children. Some of the planters and their wives are united with colored persons and others, as instructors in these schools; and the blessed work is carried on, both among the teachers and the taught, without prejudice of caste, or distinction of color.—JOSEPH JOHN GUERNEY, *A Winter in the West Indies described in familiar Letters to Henry Clay, of Kentucky*, 1840, pp. 20–23.

V

STADTHAUPTMANN CHAMBERLAIN VON SCHOLTEN'S NARRATIVE OF THE INSURRECTION OF 1848

In the week that preceded the 3rd July, 1848, I was confined to my bed with a rheumatic swelling in my right hand. On Sunday the 2nd July I felt a little better, and could more or less use the hand. On the afternoon of that day I received a visit from one of our most respectable planters. In the course of our conversation, he told me that there were strange reports in circulation concerning the negroes, who, it was said, were to refuse to go to work on the next day, and to demand their freedom. He could not assign any further grounds for these reports than hearsay. Being accustomed to hear of war and revolution in Europe, as well as disturbances and riot in the French islands, from the fact of the majority in this little place, Frederiksted, seeking to make up for the monotony of their existence by spreading and listening to all sorts of idle rumours and scandals, this information made no further impression upon me. I bade him, in the meantime, to acquaint the commander of the fort, and the policeman with

what he had heard, and promised myself to inform my brother, the Governor-General, as soon as he arrived here in the "Ornen," a brig-of-war, which was momentarily expected.

At about eight o'clock in the evening my physician came to attend to me, and he spoke of the alarming reports that were in circulation. As he appeared to be somewhat concerned about the matter, I remonstrated with him and spoke of the evil of spreading such reports, which, if unfounded, might awaken ideas among the slaves which it was to the interest of every one to prevent. Not that I feared that they would be disposed to violence or riot. They had been generally well treated and were apparently satisfied.

About nine o'clock, I received a message that the Governor-General had arrived in Christiansted, and that his carriage which stood in my yard was to go up there, but as it was late, I gave orders to the coachman to wait until next day. In the meantime I went to bed. A short time after my servant told me that there must be fire in the country as the bells were being rung and shells blown. As this is the customary manner of giving notice of such, the thought of anything unusual did not occur to me. And as I could see no sign of any fire from my house, which is built on an elevation, I concluded that it was upon a distant estate, and again sought refuge in sleep. This lasted but a short time, when I was once again aroused by a loud knocking at my gate. Opening the window, I immediately recognized the voice of the Brandmajor commanding in Frederiksted, he told me that the negroes in the country were rioting and desired their freedom, and that was the reason why the bell-ringing and blowing of shells were to be heard. We then spoke about the plan of action we should adopt, and whether the alarm gun should be fired or the Brand corps and Militia should be called out. The Major having stated that the negroes were committing no excesses and only making a disturbance, I looked upon this as a good sign, for when one has evil designs he rarely makes a noise, but generally proceeds to action at once. Nevertheless, it was a doubtful point with me whether I, as Stadthauptmand, would be justified in firing the alarm, the militia law not stating anything definite or to the point as to who should give such an order. On the other hand, my authority only extended over the militia. Over the Fort from which the alarm gun should be fired I had no command whatsoever.

There were many considerations which induced me to proceed with caution in the matter.

To have fired the alarm would have been equivalent to placing the island in a state of siege. The power to do this rested only with the Governor. Moreover, such an act would have summoned the whole of the white population into town, away from their estates, leaving their wives, children and old women in the power of the negroes. With no one to check them, had excesses been committed, how blameable it would have been to have acted so precipitately. I was confirmed in this opinion by a planter and military officer, who shared my views on the subject. The officer remarking that: "Should the negroes be intent on evil, they could easily prevent isolated members of the militia from coming in, and should the opposite be the case, he saw no reason for calling them from their estates, where they might by their presence be able to check violence and plunder." The policeman—Andersen—coincided with these views, observing: "Let us not by hasty proceedings provoke the negroes. The bell-ringing and noise do not indicate that they are intent upon violence. We must proceed with caution if we do not desire to see things worse." These words from one who had a large experience of the character of the negro, carried weight with most of us.

The opinion has since been expressed on more than one occasion, that the Brand corps, which was composed of free coloured people, should have been called out, but from prudential motives it was deemed advisable to limit their action until absolutely necessary. I shall now attempt to picture the events which followed.

About two o'clock a.m., eight or ten mounted militiamen came in from the country and informed me that the condition was such as the earlier reports had stated. That there were noisy demonstrations and disorder, but nowhere had actual violence been committed. These gentlemen had left behind them their wives, mothers and children, so to speak, in the power of the negroes, without the least fear that they would be exposed to any kind of danger. They came to inquire if the alarm gun had been fired, and if such were the case, to meet as accustomed. I explained to them that the gun had not been fired, as it was not considered prudent to call them away at such a moment from their property, where they could best work to preserve order. They therefore returned to their homes. At four o'clock a.m., I sent off my brother's carriage to Christiansted, and by same opportunity a letter in which I

described to him the condition of things in Frederiksted. At the same time expressing the hope that order and quiet might be restored by representations and negotiations.

At seven o'clock in the morning, the negroes streamed into the town in large numbers. Shortly afterwards it was reported to me that the police office was being plundered and demolished. The second Brand officer, who was with me, after expressing the opinion that it was in no way advisable to call out the corps, undertook with some of the best disposed of his men to assist in the keeping of order. And it is but fair to say, that it was owing to the activity and representations of the free coloured men that more violence was not committed, only three houses being plundered and wrecked. At about this time a negro came crying to me and begged me to write a letter to the Governor-General asking that he would come down to Frederiksted as soon as possible, so that by his presence he might save the town from further molestation. With this I joyfully complied, beseeching my brother not to delay, as only he would be able to quiet the negroes. In the meantime the Brand major had narrowly escaped with his life. Riding into town from his estate he was attacked by the negroes, a negro woman striking at his neck with an axe, which fortunately glanced off without injuring him. To show that he intended them no harm, he threw away his sword, exclaiming: "Take my life, if that can satisfy you, I come not as an enemy, but as a friend!" With these words they seemed impressed, and allowed him to pass on his way.

A crowd of negroes came shouting and yelling up the street, and stood in front of my residence, demanding that I should proclaim their immediate freedom. Representing to them how wrongly they had acted by destroying and plundering, I advised them to keep quiet until the Governor-General arrived, as he alone could satisfy their demands. Seeing that they were now more peaceable, I went to the Fort, where several of the inhabitants of the town had assembled. These were most restless, not to say unreasonable. Some thought that to save the town from further disturbance, I should, in the Governor-General's name, have declared the negroes free, but, as, in my opinion, I had no such power, I could not, nor would not, take it upon myself to do so. Nevertheless, it was the opinion of every one that only the prompt emancipation of the slaves would save the island from further destruction. And now a considerable number of negroes had

assembled together in the Fort yard. They cried and shouted, demanded their freedom, and called on the soldiers to fire upon them. This the commander of the Fort had some difficulty in preventing. Many who were present begged him also not to do so, as the town would surely be burnt to ashes. Of this there could not be any doubt, as near by, behind a corner house, which could not be commanded by the guns of the Fort there were several negro women gathered together with "trash" or dry cane leaves, which, at the first shot from the Fort, it was arranged they should light and throw into the doors and windows. The fire would thus have spread quickly through the town, as the houses were mostly deserted, and there was no one to check it. With a view of quieting the threatening multitude, I went among them, accompanied by the Catholic priest¹ and a few of the bravest of the inhabitants. The priest, whose influence was very great, spoke to them, admonishing and exhorting them to be quiet. On the other hand, on my addressing myself to one who appeared to be a leader of them, I received the following reply: "Massa, we poor negroes cannot fight with the soldiers, as we have no guns, but we can burn and destroy if we do not get our freedom, and that is what we intend to do."

It was rumoured in the Fort that the negroes intended to storm it, and for that reason had procured an English flag, which they regarded as the symbol of freedom. I myself saw the flag in the crowd, and nearing the flag-bearer after some difficulty, I asked the young negro why he did not carry the Danish instead of the English flag, to which he answered: "Any flag is good on such an occasion." But on my speaking further he seemed visibly embarrassed, and moved away among the crowd. About ten o'clock a.m. a great noise was heard in the upper part of the town. Some said it was the Governor-General, but it turned out to be the Stadthauptmand of Christiansted, Oberst de Nully, and the Governor-General's adjutant. The Oberst stepped out of the carriage and spoke to the crowd, which was so dissatisfied that the Governor-General had not come himself that they would not listen to him. Suddenly there was a great movement among them, and with repeated cries of "Moore!" "Moore!" they rushed down the Strand-street. Here the infuriated mob commenced immediately to plunder and destroy Merchant Moore's store and residence. Mr. Moore himself sought refuge on board one of the vessels in the

¹ Father O'Ryan.

harbour. The cause of this unexpected outbreak is said to have been brought about by Mr. Moore's carelessly speaking to the negroes, who understood that he would request the garrison of the Fort to shoot them down. This would have been an easy matter, for it was quite possible to sweep the street with a couple of field guns from the water battery and the Fort gate; but the commander of the Fort was besought not to fire for fear that in their desire for revenge the negroes would burn down the town and destroy every white person who might fall into their hands. Besides, as the actually guilty ones were in Mr. Moore's house, plundering, only innocent people who were in the street would have been killed. Several sailors from the English vessels in the harbour were now to be seen among the excited people, encouraging them by words and actions. And particularly conspicuous upon the wharf were several water casks belonging to these vessels, on which was written in large letters—"Liberty." It is worthy of remark, in contrast to these proceedings, that the free coloured population did their utmost to prevent the negroes from breaking into the houses and warehouses in the vicinity.

Most of the whites were now either on board the vessels or in hiding. About this time a negro appeared upon the scene, who seemed to be in command of the immense concourse of people which filled the street. This was Buddhoe, or as he was called later on, General Bourdeaux.

About three o'clock p.m., the Governor-General arrived, accompanied by Kammerjunker Upper Court Assessor Rothe. The General stepped out near the Fort, went in among the crowd and declared the negroes to be free. He then requested Kammerjunker Rothe, and as far as I can remember, Major Gyllich, the Brand major, to see that the negroes left the town, which these gentlemen soon accomplished.

Later on a detachment of troops arrived from Christiansted, and at five o'clock p.m. the Governor-General returned to Christiansted, after having ordered the cavalry, which had recently arrived, to go back again. First Lieutenant v Holstein, with two pieces of cannon and forth men, remained over night in the Fort.

The brig-of-war "Ornen," Captain Irminger, arrived in the harbour shortly before sunset. The night passed quietly enough, though fires illuminated the hills of the north side. On Tuesday, the 4th of July, a number of negroes were seen on the road leading to the North side, and it was feared that, should they enter the

town, it would doubtless result in bloodshed or incendiarism. In order to prevent this, Major Gyllich rode out among them, and, by repeated assurances that they were now free and would not be brought back to slavery again, succeeded in inducing them to return to their homes. At the same time he persuaded the negro Buddhoe to accompany him to town, a wise move, for it was through this negro's influence over them that order and quiet were restored to this part of the island. In the meantime, Kammerjunker Rothe arrived from Christiansted, whence he had started in the morning with a number of printed copies of the proclamation of freedom. Shortly after his arrival, three expeditions were organised to make their contents known among the negroes. Kammerjunker Rothe, the Vice-Brand major and a prominent planter, went to Annally and Spring Garden, while Major Gyllich, Buddhoe, or General Bourdeaux² and two of the most respectable free coloured burghers went to the South side.

The company in which I found myself arrived first at estate "La Grange." We had little difficulty in getting the negroes together, who stood around our carriage as Kammerjunker Rothe read out and explained the proclamation to them. Continuing our road, we came to estate "Northside," where we met the owner and his family who had remained there during the whole tumult. They told us that during the forenoon of the same day, they had been attacked by the negroes from the neighbouring estate of "Ham's Bay," who under the pretext of wanting to take the overseer's weapons from him, attempted to force the dwelling house. The negroes of the estate defended them and prevented the intended violence. From that place we went to "Ham's Bay," where we found it difficult to collect the negroes, who had forced the owner and his family to take flight in a fishing boat shortly before. After having restored something like order among them, we returned to Frederiksted.

The expedition in charge of Major Gyllich, after visiting twenty odd estates reached as far as "La Reine." Mr. Beech read the proclamation on each of them. On the road they learned that there was a large gathering at estate "Slob," which had been doing a great deal of plundering and destruction. Though Buddhoe declared that he did not know the negroes on that part of the island, and it was remarked that estate "Slob" was outside of

² He had obtained this brilliant military title on account of his fantastic attire.

West End jurisdiction, Major Gyllieh decided to go there, being under the impression that he might prevent further troubles.

Going up the hill towards "Slob," they met a man named "Martin King," chief of the "fleet," as they called this meeting. This negro who was half drunk and riding a white horse, and who seemed to be a leader among the crowd which they encountered, upon understanding the object of the expedition, after a great deal of outrageous and foolish talk yielded to the representations of the Major, and by the influence he seemed to wield over the rest of his comrades, was of great assistance in restoring order among them. After visiting estates "La Reine" and "Mount Pleasant," the major and his party returned to Frederiksted.

On Tuesday and Wednesday several planters with their families came into town, and sought refuge on board the ships in the harbour. The owner of the estate "Negro Bay," with twenty or thirty other managers and overseers also came in, an error which resulted in his estate being plundered. By this time prisoners were being continually brought in. The negroes bringing them in themselves. To this Buddhoe mainly contributed. On Thursday morning at four o'clock a considerable force consisting of two cannon, infantry and cavalry under the command of Captain v Castonier left the town. In the meantime the Fort was garrisoned from the brig-of-war. Though this expedition met with no opposition, it served a good purpose, as from that time perfect quiet and order were brought about.—TAYLOR, *Leaflets from the Danish West Indies*, pp. 126–132.

VI

CHAMBERLAIN IRMINGER'S ACCOUNT OF THE INSURRECTION OF 1848

After a stay of several days in the island of St. Thomas, Governor-General v Scholten sailed in the forenoon of the 2nd July, 1848, for St. Croix, in the brig-of-war "Ornen," which I commanded.

About four o'clock in the afternoon we anchored in Bassin (Christiansted), suspecting nothing of the row which the negroes intended to make. The General dined with me. At sunset he landed in order to proceed to Bülowsminde, and as he heard that I intended to have the ship painted, he invited me to pass the time at his beautiful country seat.

About 10 o'clock, p.m. we retired to rest. The 3rd July, at

about two o'clock in the morning, I was awakened by the General's servant with a request that I would come to the General as quickly as possible. I immediately repaired to his presence and found him already dressed. He then showed me a report from the Chief Commander of the Fort in West End (Frederiksted), Capt. v Castonier, which stated that the negroes were restless at that part of the island—that bells were being rung on the estates—and they were sounding the alarm on their shells (conchshells).

When I had read the report, the Governor-General said: "What is now to be done?" To this I answered that I thought the best thing to do was to seek as quickly as possible to smother the disturbance at its birth, because every minute now lost would lend additional strength to the disturbers of the peace. It was my impression that twenty to thirty armed men should immediately be sent on horseback to West End in order to scatter the negroes apart.

The Governor remarking that he could not dispose of such a force, I replied that I did not think it would be so difficult to get such a number of mounted militia collected from the nearest estates.

In the meantime, the General's horses were saddled and we now both rode, accompanied by a mounted servant, down to the Government house in Bassin. The night was a starry one and the weather exceedingly fine. We stopped now and then on the tops of the different hills which we rode over to listen if we could not hear the blowing of shells or any shouting. But all was hushed, and we heard only the rustling of the cocoa-nut palm leaves moved by the trade wind. As soon as we arrived in town, messages were sent to Major v Falbe, who was Chief of the Fort in Bassin, Major v Geillerup, who lived in the barracks, Oberst de Nully, Major Keutsch and others. We now spoke of what was to be done. I still maintained that action should be taken immediately and that if the cavalry force which I had asked for could not be got, which I could by no means admit, other military must immediately be sent to West End. I furthermore said to the General that I would go on board to let the men that could be dispensed with get ready to land, and, at the same time, get the brig ready for sea so as to be able to leave for West End by daybreak, if ordered. The General requested me to remain a little longer in the Government House so as to avoid making any disturbance in town where all was still and quiet. The conference ended, I believe, in Major

Keutsch's coachman being sent towards West End for more information as to how it stood with the island. It was now nearly five o'clock in the morning. The time passed and nothing was done. I believed I knew the negro character, and that the riot could have been smothered at the beginning by decisive action. Seeing that my presence at Government House was of no further use, I told the General that I would now go on board, so that I could get the brig ready for sea, and to send armed men on shore, if required. This I did, and awaited the General's order.

To my surprise I received none whatsoever, and about eight o'clock a.m. I again went on shore. There I was informed that Oberst de Nully and Lieutenant v Meincke had been sent to West End. I also found some soldiers drawn up and ready to set out, though I afterwards learned, with orders not to go further than King's Hill (an estate in the middle of the island.) Interrogating the General as to whether the brig should not sail to West End, I received the answer that she might be possibly required in Bassin, and I would receive further orders.

In Bassin, everything was quiet, and I began to believe that the whole affair did not mean much. Indeed, scarcely any one seemed to have any knowledge of it. I then informed the General that everything was ready as well for sea, as to send men ashore, and should the General have anything to order, I could be found in the Athenaeum; a reading room nearly opposite the Government House. About one o'clock p.m., Lieutenant v Meincke arrived from West End and reported the state of affairs. He brought at the same time information that the negroes wanted to speak to the Governor-General himself. General v Scholten had the horses immediately put to, taking Kammerjunker Rothe with him into the carriage to drive to Frederiksted. This man, from what I had heard, had been always an advocate for the emancipation of the negroes. Before the General drove off, I requested a decided order from him as to whether I should remain lying in Bassin or depart for West End. After some reflection, he gave me the order. With this I left for that place.

On my arrival, and immediately after having anchored, the "Ornen's" boats were armed, and I went ashore. The King's Wharf was full of negroes, and everything was in disorder. Accompanied by some of my armed men, I went to the Fort. By the entrance to same, I met General v Scholten in his carriage; he was just ready to drive back to Bassin. I reported my arrival,

and asked for orders. The General's answer was: "I have given Emancipation. Remain here with the 'Ornen'."

This was the last order I received from him, and I did not see him again before my arrival in Denmark in the following year.

In the Fort I spoke with Captain v Castonier, and shortly after, I sent, according to agreement with him, an officer with about fifty men as a reinforcement as well as for patrolling. This detachment remained ashore some time.

"By this time nearly all the estate negroes had left the town. Still everything was in the greatest confusion. Town-Bailiff Andresen's house and Police-Assistent Didrichsen's were entirely wrecked by the negroes. A Mr. Moore's house and store had suffered to the extent of 20,000 dollars. Several lesser excesses had been committed, and armed negroes were seen off and on riding through the streets at a gallop. Most of the whites had fled to vessels lying in the harbour, of which the 'Johann Marie' had over two hundred fugitives on board. On the night of our arrival, fires illumined different parts of the island."¹

As every thing was yet in the greatest confusion, and deeming it of the utmost importance to bring about order, Vice-Stadthauptmand F. v Scholten, the commander of the Fort, Captain Castonier, Police-master Ogaard and myself, assembled, and after due deliberation, issued the following order:—

"It is hereby made known, for the information of everyone concerned, that in case the country people should come to town in a riotous way and threaten to attack the Fort, or otherwise to disturb the inhabitants, then, and in such case, where more than ten people are collected together, the Fort is ordered to fire upon them, as also his Majesty's brig-of-war 'Ornen.' All peaceable inhabitants are therefore desired not to interfere with the country people, but keep out of their way.

"Frederiksted, 4th July, 1848.

"F. SCHOLTEN, C. IRMINGER, CASTONIER, OGAARD."

At the same time, the Proclamation of Emancipation that had been sent to West End from Bassin was read out. It is as follows:—

1. All unfree in the Danish West India Islands are from to-day free.

¹ Extract from Captain Irmingers Report to the Minister of Marine. Despatched 12th July, 1848.

2. The estate negroes retain for three months from date the use of the houses and provision grounds of which they have hitherto been possessed.

3. Labour is in future to be paid for by agreement, but allowance of food to cease.

4. The maintenance of the old and infirm, who are not able to work, is, until further determined, to be furnished by the late owners.

The General Government of the Danish West India Islands,
St. Croix, the 3rd July, 1848.

P. v SCHOLTEN.
(L. S.)

Still the greatest disorder reigned in the country, and there was much plundering and destruction on the estates. In the meantime many negroes showed that they themselves wished for peace and order. So much so, that several of the originators of the disturbances were caught and brought into the Fort by the friendly-inclined negroes.

On the 5th July, the condition of the country being about the same, and as several buildings, together with a large garden planted with cocoa-nut trees near to the Fort, obscured the view and prevented firing from the Fort in that direction, it was found expedient to demolish them. This was soon effected by the brig's indefatigable crew, so that we could now cover the North side road from the Fort.

There were now forty or fifty men from the brig almost continually in the Fort as a reinforcement. As it was then found necessary to undertake military excursions inland to overawe the negroes, and at the same time to secure the authors of the riot, I took over on the 6th before daybreak the command of the Fort and garrisoned it with the crew from the brig. At four a.m. all the Royal infantry and artillery, together with the planters, overseers, and managers of estates, marched off under the command of Captain v Castonier. The latter force alone amounted to forty horsemen, and from sixty to seventy foot.

At noon Art. Lieutenant Frank arrived from Bassin with a detachment of militia cavalry. Immediately after, a report was circulated that the Governor-General was dying, and on that account a Provisional Government had been organized in Bassin. I asked Lieutenant Frank if he knew anything about it, to which

he answered that shortly before he had left Bassin, he had seen the General on the wharf.

Some time after Kammerjunker Rothe arrived in a boat from Bassin and read aloud the following:—

“On account of the illness of the Governor-General, and with his concurrence, have we, the undersigned, Govt. Councillor Kunzen, Govt. Councillor Petersen, Kammerjunker Landsoverrets Assessor Rothe, Justitsraad Lands-overrets Assessor Foester, Justitsraad Police-master Frederiksen, Kammar Assessor Arnesen, and Lawyer Bahneberg, assembled as a Governing Commission, with full power to take all steps necessary in the present disturbed condition to bring about peace and order in the country.

“The command of the military will be taken over by Oberst P. de Nully and Major A. v Falbe, who will confer with the above-named commission if necessary.

“St. Croix Christensted,
6th July, 1848.

“KUNZEN, C. B. PETERSEN, FOESTER, ROTHE, FREDERIKSEN, H. L. ARNESEN, BAHNEBERG.

“CARL REIMERS.”

As the two Royal Government Councillors, Kunzen and Petersen, according to my ideas, could just as well have been in charge of the Government with full powers, notwithstanding that the Governor-General was sick, and there were even contradictory reports as to the correctness of that. I, for my part, protested against acknowledging this new Government until I was certain as to how it had originated. At half past four o'clock p.m. the men that had marched out in the morning returned with several of the leaders of the rising, upon which I again handed over the Fort to its commander.

Although the military which had returned had not met with any opposition on their march, and the negroes on many estates had shown that they wished for peace and order, there were yet many of them who sought to excite the better part of the population. For this reason, and in view of the necessity for action, Vice-Stadthauptmand F. v Scholten, Major Gyllich, Capt. v Castonier, Policemaster Ogaard, Lawyer Sarauw, and I were unanimous in publishing the following:—

“As the Authorities here have received no answer from His Excellency the Governor-General to the Reports forwarded to him,

nor any of the instructions requested, and having this day learned that on account of illness he is not in a condition to occupy himself with instructions, and as it is moreover necessary during the present negro rebellion in this jurisdiction to act immediately, we, the undersigned, as the highest authority in the place, have assembled to act until further.

“Frederiksted, 6th July, 1848.

“F. SCHOLTEN, C. IRMINGER, CASTONIER, GYLICH, OGAARD, SARAuw.”

We then made known:—

“It is with the utmost satisfaction that the inhabitants of this jurisdiction have learned that order and obedience to the laws has commenced to be re-established, and as from most evidence the hope can be entertained that regularity and order will go hand and hand, it is hereby promulgated that any person or persons opposing the authorities, or in any other manner combining for illegal or violent purposes, will be dealt with as rioters, and instantly shot. All peaceable and well-disposed inhabitants are called upon to assist the authorities in quelling disorder and apprehending the rioters.

“Frederiksted, 6th July, 1848.

“F. SCHOLTEN, C. IRMINGER, CASTONIER, GYLICH, OGAARD, SARAuw.”

As many of the refugees on board the vessels were still in dread of the rioting negroes, and as there was some reason to suppose that in their fear they would remove from the island, in order to prevent them doing so, I forbade all ferrying with boats, from nine o'clock in the evening till four o'clock in the morning, which times were made known by a cannon shot from the brig.

On the 7th the military again marched out in different directions. This had a good effect upon the negroes, and the roads became once more safe for traffic. In the Fort there were about one hundred rioters, of which the greater part had been brought in by the friendly negroes from the estates. A portion of the prisoners were taken on board the brig, and some distributed among the merchant vessels. In the meantime an order was issued to all parties concerned that they should within three days deliver up all stolen goods and arms, as every one, who after that time was found in possession of such, would be punished to the utmost extent of the law.

On the 8th several carriages passed between Bassin and West End. Everything was quiet and safe on the road. Refugees from the vessels returned on shore to take up their residence to town. Sugar was brought in from several estates for shipment, and as everything now promised to go on smoothly, we who had assembled as the highest authority in the place, handed over the charge of affairs to the commander of the Fort and the policeman.

At noon 220 men, auxiliary troops, arrived in Frederiksted; 360 were already in Christiansted. The Governor-General had asked for the assistance from Porto Rico. As an instance of General Prim's² customary activity it should be mentioned that this fine body of men 580 all told, with cannon, and 30,000 cartridges were got ready and put to sea five hours after he had received the letter of the Governor-General. This prompt action and the fact that the insurrection had been repressed in the eastern and western parts of the island, contributed much to allay the fears of the inhabitants, and to inspire confidence. On the 9th Chamberlain Oxholm came to West End and took over the Governor-General's affairs. In the meantime the country was quiet, and the negroes had returned to work on a few of the estates. By this time several of the rioters had been tried by court-martial and shot.

* * * * *

From the reports it will be seen that Kammerjunker Rothe was sent as a sort of commissioner to Frederiksted, in order to proclaim the new Government established in Bassin. As I had already agreed with Captain v Castonier, to take over the command of the Fort with my men, while he undertook a march into the country with the military, I protested against subjecting myself to this Government, because—

1. I assumed after the account that Lieutenant Frank had given me, that General v Scholten was not so sick but that he could have signed an order to me.

2. There were in the new Government several names almost unknown to me.

3. Kammerjunker Rothe did not produce anything in writing, either from General v Scholten, the existing Government, or the other two Government Councillors, Kunzen and Petersen, concerning this newly appointed Government Commission. I, therefore, considered it my duty not to submit myself blindly to the command

² Then Captain-General of Porto Rico.

of this Commission, especially as the report said that the Governor-General had been deposed. When Captain Castonier returned in the afternoon, I informed him of my protest. He fully concurred in my views. The other authorities in Frederiksted followed our example, and although Vice-Stadthauptmand, Chamberlain F. v Scholten, hesitated, he still signed the measures we took to restore order and quiet.

On the 12th July I despatched my report from West End to St. Thomas to leave by the Packet for Europe. It bears that day's date. Written during the actual occurrence of the riots, it contains my views respecting the events as they then appeared to me. I have seen no reason to change them. I never imagined that General v Scholten would leave the island, which, as is known, happened immediately after; consequently, my report arrived home with the same Packet on which he took passage.

On the 24th July I left West End to be on hand to assist in St. Thomas. The 6th September I received orders to come with the "Ornen" to Bassin as quickly as possible, as riots had occurred, and it was not desirable, except absolutely necessary, to use the Spaniards. The Fort in Bassin was now reinforced by men from the "Ornen," because, as is known, the Government had given way to the Brand corps and discharged the energetic Police-master Frederiksen.—TAYLOR, *Leaflets from the Danish West Indies*, pp. 133-140.

VII

ST. THOMAS AS SEEN BY AN OBSERVER IN 1858

I have said in a previous chapter that the people one meets there may be described as an Hispano-Dano-Niggery-Yankee-doodle population. In this I referred not only to the settlers, but to those also who are constantly passing through it. In the shops and stores, and at the hotels, one meets the same mixture. The Spanish element is of course strong, for Venezuela, New Granada, Central America, and Mexico are all Spanish, and hereabouts are called Spaniards. To the Danes the island belongs. The soldiers, officials, and custom-house people are Danes. They do not, however, mix much with their customers. They affect, I believe, to say that the island is overrun and destroyed by these strange comers, and that they would as lief be without such visitors. If they are altogether indifferent to money making, such may be the case. The labouring people are all black—if these blacks can be called a

labouring people. They do coal the vessels at about a dollar a day each—that is when they are so circumstanced as to require a dollar. As to the American element, that is by no means the slightest or most retiring. Dollars are going there, and therefore it is of course natural that Americans should be going also. I saw the other day a map, “The United States as they now are, and in prospective;” and it included all these places—Mexico, Central America, Cuba, St. Domingo, and even poor Jamaica. It may be that the man who made the map understood the destiny of his country; at any rate he understood the tastes of his countrymen.—ANTHONY TROLLOPE, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main*, pp. 224–225.

VIII

THE LABOR ACT

Provisional Act to Regulate the Relations between the Proprietors of Landed Estates and the Rural Population of Free Laborers

I, Peter Hansen, Knight Commander of the Order Dannebrog, the King's Commissioner for, and officiating Governor-General of the Danish West India Islands, Make known: That, whereas the ordinance dated 29th July, 1848, by which yearly contracts for labor on landed estates were introduced, has not been duly acted upon: whereas the interest of the proprietors of estates, as well as of the laborers, requires that their mutual obligations should be defined: and whereas on inquiry into the practice of the Island, and into the printed contracts and agreements hitherto made, it appears expedient to establish uniform rules throughout the Island, for the guidance of all parties concerned, it is enacted and ordained:

1st. All engagements of laborers now domiciled on landed estates and receiving wages in money, or in kind, for cultivating and working such estates, are to be continued as directed by the ordinance of 29th July, 1848, until the first day of October of the present year: and all similar engagements shall, in future, be made, or shall be considered as having been made, for a term of twelve months, viz: from the first of October till the first of October, year after year. Engagements made by heads of families are to include their children between five and fifteen years of age, and other relatives depending on them and staying with them.

2nd. No laborer engaged as aforesaid, in the cultivation of soil, shall be discharged or dismissed from, or shall be permitted to dis-

solve, his or her engagement before the expiration of the same on the first of October of the present, or of any following year, except in the instances hereafter enumerated.

A. By mutual agreement of master and laborer, before a magistrate.

B. By order of a magistrate on just and equitable cause being shown by the parties interested.

Legal marriage, and the natural tie between mothers and their children, shall be deemed by the magistrate just and legal cause of removal from one estate to another. The husband shall have a right to be removed to his wife, the wife to her husband, and children under fifteen years of age to their mother, provided no objection to employing such individuals shall be made by the owner of the estate to which the removal is to take place.

3rd. No engagement of a laborer shall be lawful in future, unless made in the presence of witnesses, and entered in the day-book of the estate.

4th. Notice to quit service shall be given by the employer, as well as by the laborer, at no other period but once a year, in the month of August, not before the first, nor after the last day of the said month; an entry thereof shall be made in the day-book, and an acknowledgement in writing shall be given to the laborer.

The laborer shall have given, or received, legal notice of removal from the estate where he serves, before any one can engage his services; otherwise the new contract to be void, and the party engaging in tampering with a laborer employed by others, will be dealt with according to law.

In case any owner or manager of an estate should dismiss a laborer during the year without sufficient cause, or should refuse to receive him at the time stipulated, or refuse to grant him a passport when due notice of removal has been given, the owner or manager is to pay full damages to the laborer, and to be sentenced to a fine not exceeding \$20.

5th. Laborers employed or rated as first, second, or third class laborers, shall perform all the work in the field, or about the works, or otherwise concerning the estate, which it hitherto has been customary for such laborers to perform, according to the season. They shall attend faithfully to their work, and willingly obey the directions given by the employer, or the person appointed by him. No laborer shall presume to dictate what work he or she is to do, or refuse the work he may be ordered to perform, unless expressly

engaged for some particular work only. If a laborer thinks himself aggrieved, he shall not therefore leave the work, but in due time apply for redress to the owner of the estate, or to the magistrate. It is the duty of all laborers on all occasions, and at all times, to protect the property of his employer, to prevent mischief to the estate, to apprehend evil-doers, and not to give countenance to, or conceal, unlawful practices.

6th. The working days to be as usual only five days in the week, and the same days as hitherto. The ordinary work of estates is to commence at sunrise, and to be finished at sunset, every day, leaving one hour for breakfast, and two hours at noon from twelve to two o'clock.

Planters who prefer to begin the work at seven o'clock in the morning, making no separate breakfast time, are at liberty to adopt this plan, either during the year, or when out of crop.

The laborers shall be present in due time at the place where they are to work. The list to be called and answered regularly. Whoever does not answer the list when called, is too late.

7th. No throwing of grass, or of wood, shall be exacted during extra hours, all former agreements to the contrary notwithstanding; but during crop the laborers are expected to bring home a bundle of long tops from the field where they are at work.

Cartmen and crook-people, when breaking off, shall attend properly to their stock as hitherto usual.

8th. During crop, the mill gang, crook gang, boilermen, firemen, still men, and any other person employed about the mill and the boiling house, shall continue their work during breakfast and noon hours, as hitherto usual; and the boilermen, firemen, megass carriers, etc., also, during evening hours after sunset, when required, but all workmen employed as aforesaid, shall be paid an extra remuneration for the work done by them in extra hours.

The boiling house is to be cleared, the mill to be washed down, and the megass to be swept up, before the laborers leave the work as hitherto usual.

The mill is not to turn after six o'clock in the evening, and the boiling not to be continued after ten o'clock, except by special permission of the Governor-General, who then will determine, if any, what extra remuneration shall be paid to the laborers.

9th. The laborers are to receive, until otherwise ordered, the following remuneration:

A. The use of a house, or dwelling-rooms for themselves and

their children, to be built and repaired by the estate, but to be kept in proper order by the laborers.

B. The use of a piece of provision ground, thirty feet square, as usual, for every first and second class laborer, or if it be standing ground, up to fifty feet in square. Third class laborers are not entitled to, but may be allowed, some provision ground.

C. Weekly wages at the rate of fifteen cents to every first class laborer, of ten cents to every second class laborer, and of five cents to every third class laborer, for every working day. When the usual allowance of meal and herrings has been agreed on in part of wages, full weekly allowance shall be taken for five cents a day, or twenty-five cents a week.

Nurses losing two hours every working day, shall be paid at the rate of four full working days in the week. The wages of minors to be paid as usual to their parents, or to the person in charge of them.

Laborers not calling at pay time personally, or by another authorized, to wait till next pay day, unless they were prevented by working for the estate.

No attachment of wages for private debts to be allowed, nor more than two thirds to be deducted for debts to the estate, unless otherwise ordered by the magistrate.

Extra provisions occasionally given during the ordinary working hours are not to be claimed as a right, nor to be bargained for.

10th. Work in extra hours during crop, is to be paid as follows: To the mill gang, and to the crook gang, for working through the breakfast hour, one stiver, and for working through noon, two stivers per day. Extra provision is not to be given, except at the option of the laborers in place of the money, or in part of it.

The boilermen, firemen, the megass carriers, are to receive for all days when the boiling is carried on until late hours, a maximum pay of twenty (20) cents per day. No bargaining for extra pay by the hour, is permitted.

Laborers working such extra hours only by turns, are not to have additional payment.

11th. Tradesmen on estates are considered as engaged to perform the same work as hitherto usual, assisting in the field, carting, potting sugar, &c. They shall be rated as first, second, and third class laborers, according to their proficiency; where no definite terms have been agreed on previously, the wages of first class tradesmen, having full work in their trade, are to be twenty (20)

cents per day. Any existing contract with tradesmen is to continue until October next.

No tradesman is allowed to keep apprentices without the consent of the owner of the estate, such apprentices to be bound for no less a period than three years, and not to be removed without the permission of the magistrate.

12th. No laborer is obliged to work for others on Saturday; but if they choose to work for hire, it is proper that they should give their own estate the preference. For a full day's work on Saturday, there shall not be asked for nor given more than twenty (20) cents to a first class laborer, thirteen (13) cents to a second class laborer, seven (7) cents to a third class laborer.

Work on Saturday may, however, be ordered by the magistrate as a punishment to the laborer, for having absented himself from work during the week for one whole day or more, and for having been idle during the week, and then the laborer shall not receive more than his usual pay for a common day's work.

13th. All the male laborers, tradesmen included, above eighteen years of age, working on an estate, are bound to take the usual night watch by turns, but only once in ten days, notice to be given before noon to break off from work in the afternoon with the nurses, and to come to work next day at eight o'clock. The watch to be delivered in the usual manner by nightfall and by sunrise.

The above rule shall not be compulsory, except where voluntary watchmen cannot be obtained at a hire the planters may be willing to give, to save the time lost by employing their ordinary laborers as watchmen.

Likewise the male laborers are bound once a month, on Sundays and holydays, to take the day watch about the yard, and to act as pasturemen, on receiving their usual pay for a week day's work; this rule applies also to the crook-boys.

All orders about the watches to be duly entered in the day book of the estate.

Should a laborer, having been duly warned to take the watch, not attend, another laborer is to be hired in the place of the absentee, and at his expense, not, however, to exceed fifteen cents. The person who wilfully leaves the watch, or neglects it, is to be reported to the magistrate and punished as the case merits.

14th. Laborers wilfully abstaining from work on a working day, are to forfeit their wages for the day, and will have to pay over and above the forfeit, a fine which can be lawfully deducted in their wages, of seven (7) cents for a first class laborer, five (5)

cents for a second class laborer, and two (2) cents for a third class laborer. In crop or grinding days, when employed about the works, in cutting canes, or in crook, an additional punishment will be awarded for wilful absence and neglect by the magistrate, on complaint being made. Laborers abstaining from work for half a day, or breaking off from work before being dismissed, to forfeit their wages for one day.

Laborers not coming to work in due time to forfeit half a day's wages.

Parents keeping their children from work, shall be fined instead of the children.

No charge of house rent is to be made in future, on account of absence from work, or for the Saturday.

15th. Laborers wilfully abstaining from work for two or more days during the week, or habitually absenting themselves, or working badly and lazily shall be punished as the case merits, on complaint to the magistrate.

16th. Laborers assaulting any person in authority on the estate, or planning and conspiring to retard, or to stop the work of the estate, or uniting to abstain from work, or to break their engagements, shall be punished according to law, on investigation before a magistrate.

17th. Until measures can be adopted for securing medical attendance to the laborers, and for regulating the treatment of the sick and the infirm, it is ordered:

That infirm persons unfit for any work, shall, as hitherto, be maintained on the estates where they are domiciled, and to be attended to by their next relations.

That parents or children of such infirm persons shall not remove from the estate, leaving them behind, without making provision for them to the satisfaction of the owner, or of the magistrate.

That laborers unable to attend to work on account of illness, or on account of having sick children, shall make a report to the manager, or any other person in authority on the estate, who, if the case appears dangerous, and the sick person destitute, shall cause medical assistance to be given.

That all sick laborers willing to remain in the hospital during their illness, shall there be attended to, at the cost of the estate.

18th. If a laborer reported sick, shall be at any time found absent from the estate without leave, or is trespassing about the estate, or found occupied with work requiring health, he shall be considered skulking and wilfully absent from work.

When a laborer pretends illness, and is not apparently sick, it shall be his duty to prove his illness by medical certificate.

19th. Pregnant women shall be at liberty to work with the small gang as customary, and when confined, not to be called on to work for seven weeks after their confinement.

Young children shall be fed and attended to during the hours of work at some proper place, at the cost of the estate.

Nobody is allowed to stay from work on pretence of attending a sick person, except the wife and the mother in dangerous cases of illness.

20th. It is the duty of the managers to report to the police any contagious or suspicious cases of illness and death; especially when gross neglect is believed to have taken place, as when children have been neglected by their mothers, in order that the guilty person may be punished according to law.

21st. The driver or foreman on the estate, is to receive in wages four and a half dollars monthly, if no other terms have been agreed upon. The driver may be dismissed at any time during the year with the consent of the magistrate. It is the duty of the driver to see the work duly performed, to maintain order and peace on the estate during the work, and at other times, and to prevent and report all offences committed. Should any laborer insult, or use insulting language towards him during, or on account of the performance of his duties, such person is to be punished according to law.

22nd. No laborer is allowed, without the especial permission of the owner or manager, to appropriate wood, grass, vegetables, fruits, and the like, belonging to the estate, nor to appropriate such produce from other estates, nor to cut canes, or to burn charcoal. Persons making themselves guilty of such offences, shall be punished according to law, with fines or imprisonment with hard labor; and the possession of such articles not satisfactorily accounted for, shall be sufficient evidence of unlawful acquisition.

23d. All agreements contrary to the above rules, are to be null and void, and owners and managers of estates convicted of any practice tending wilfully to counteract or avoid these rules by direct or indirect means, shall be subject to a fine not exceeding \$200.

(Signed,)

P. HANSEN.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, ST. CROIX, 26th January, 1849.

—KNOX, *An Historical Account of St. Thomas, West Indies*, pp. 248-255.